

CALIFORNIA WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATIONSHIPS SYSTEM
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B219 Yellow-footed Gull *Larus livens*
Family: Laridae Order: Charadriiformes Class: Aves

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DISTRIBUTION, ABUNDANCE, AND SEASONALITY

A fairly common summer visitor to the Salton Sea, Imperial Co., where up to 200 have been reported (Garrett and Dunn 1981). Breeds primarily in the Gulf of California (LeValley 1980). This species was recorded first at the Salton Sea in 1965 (Devillers et al. 1971), and recently small numbers have wintered there. A few records exist for coastal San Diego Co. (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

SPECIFIC HABITAT REQUIREMENTS

Feeding: In winter, feeds alone or in small flocks, sometimes among other species. Tends to keep closer to the shoreline than other gulls, and may feed while wading (Devillers et al. 1971). Often feeds near shrimp boats in the Gulf of California (LeValley 1980). In California, feeds mostly near the shores of Salton Sea, but occasionally forages for insects in nearby croplands (Garrett and Dunn 1981).

Cover: When not feeding, roosts on open shorelines or in shallow water.

Reproduction: Nests in island colonies in the Gulf of California. Nest placed beyond the high tide line, usually just below the first xeric vegetation on islands (LeValley 1980). Nest occasionally found in rocky areas. The relatively large nest consists mostly of sargassum weed (*Sargassum* spp.) (LeValley 1980).

Water: No additional data found.

Pattern: Requires sandy or rocky shorelines for breeding in Baja California. At the Salton Sea, it frequents open beaches, shallow waters, and occasionally croplands.

SPECIES LIFE HISTORY

Activity Patterns: Yearlong, diurnal activity.

Seasonal Movements/Migration: After breeding in the Gulf of California, small numbers migrate northward to the Salton Sea. Unlike the closely related western gull that rarely strays from seacoasts, this gull crosses about 150 km of land to reach the sea (LeValley 1980). Although primarily a summer visitor, has been reported in all months but October at the Salton Sea (Cogswell 1977).

Home Range: No data found.

Territory: Breeds in colonies with nests parallel to the shoreline, spaced at intervals of 1-10 m (3-33 ft) (LeValley 1980).

Reproduction: Eggs are laid in early to mid-April, and incubation lasts 3.5 to 4 wk. Nesting is colonial; average clutch size is 3 eggs. Young are semi-precocial; most have attained juvenile plumage by mid-June (LeValley 1980). A 4-yr plumage sequence precedes adult plumage, as occurs in most other *Larus* gulls (Dwight 1925, LeValley 1980).

Niche: Habits apparently very similar to western gull.

Comments: Recently described as a separate species from the western gull (American Ornithologists' Union 1983). Because of its limited range and previously uncertain status, there is little published literature available.

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